

# Lesson 1: Christ and the Bible

## I. CHRIST AND THE BIBLE

### A. Different Worldviews about God

1. **Atheism** – No God or gods.
2. **Agnosticism** – Impossible to know if there is a God or gods.
3. **Polytheism** – Belief in many gods.
4. **Monotheism** – Belief in one God.
5. **Deism** – Belief in a God, but He is impersonal and distant.

### B. The Christian Worldview

- Our understanding of God comes solely from **Jesus Christ**.
- Everything we know about God must conform to and come from **what Jesus has revealed** about Himself.

## II. The Significance of Jesus

### A. Jesus and World Religions

- Every religion has something to say about Jesus (prophet, teacher, leader, god, Son of God, etc.).
- **Christianity** stands apart in that it believes Jesus **is God**.

### B. Our Knowledge of Jesus

- Our understanding of Jesus comes from:
  - **What Jesus says about Himself.**
  - **What Jesus has done** (His works).
- If we want to know about God, **we must know Jesus**.

## III. The Importance of Knowing Christ

### A. Philippians 3:7-8

- Paul lists his accomplishments and good works (Phil. 3:4-6).
- He calls them **loss** compared to the **surpassing worth of knowing Christ**.
- Analogy: Like someone who spent years living recklessly but later regrets not spending time with the love of their life. Paul sees his old life as **wasted**.

### B. "Rubbish" (Phil. 3:8)

- The Greek word is **skubala** (a crude term, like a bathroom word).
- Paul considers his old self-righteousness as **disgusting** compared to knowing Christ.
- It wasn't the good works themselves that were bad—it was his **trust** in them.



## IV. What Does it Mean to Know Christ?

### A. John 10:14-15

- Jesus defines what it means to **know Him**:
  1. **Hear His Voice** – Listen to His Word (v. 27).
  2. **Are Known by Him** – Have the comfort that Jesus thinks of and cares for you (v. 27).
  3. **Follow Him** – Trust and obey Him (v. 27).
- To know Christ is to know that **He laid down His life for you**.

### B. Relationship vs. Religion

- **Religion** (Latin: *relegere*) = “To read again,” following rules and customs.
- **Relationship** (Latin: *relatio*) = “To be connected,” a personal and living bond with Christ.
- Christianity is both **religion** (formal worship) and **relationship** (trust in Jesus).

## V. Our Chief Ambition in Life

### Philippians 3:10

- The primary goal of life is **to know Christ**.
- This should also be the chief goal for:
  - Yourself
  - Your spouse
  - Your children
- Everything else is secondary.

## THE BIBLE: HOW CAN WE KNOW CHRIST?

### I. The Bible vs. Other Sacred Writings

- Other religions have their sacred texts (Quran, Vedas, Dianetics, etc.).
- The Bible is unique because it contains both:
  - **Law** – God’s commands and expectations.
  - **Gospel** – God’s work to save us through Jesus.

### II. Structure of the Bible

1. **Old Testament (OT)** – 39 books, written in Hebrew (1500 BC – 450 BC).
2. **New Testament (NT)** – 27 books, written in Greek (45 AD – 95 AD).
  - Life of Jesus: 1 BC – 33 AD
  - NT written: 12 years after the resurrection.
  - Key authors:
    - **Matthew & John** – Apostles (eyewitnesses).
    - **Mark** – Authorized by Peter (apostle).



- **Luke** – Authorized by Paul (apostle).

### III. How Was the Canon Formed?

1. **Jesus** – If Jesus quoted a book (e.g., Genesis, Isaiah), that book was recognized as authoritative.
2. **Apostles** – Books quoted by the apostles were also accepted.
3. **The Early Church** – Used Jesus and the apostles' authority to form the Canon.
  - The Canon was not "voted on"; it was **recognized**.

### IV. Is the Bible Reliable?

- **The Problem:** We cannot "scientifically prove" the Bible without requiring some measure of faith.
- Example: Trying to prove reason is true by using reason is circular. Faith is required.

#### A. Reasons to Trust the Bible

1. **Logical Consistency** – The Bible has internal coherence across 66 books, 40+ authors, and 1,500+ years.
2. **Reasonableness** – The Bible aligns with human experience (sin, guilt, hope, etc.).
3. **Archaeological Evidence** – Biblical places, events, and people have been discovered and verified.
  - Example: Dead Sea Scrolls, Pool of Bethesda, Hittites, etc.
4. **Historical Reliability** – Extra-biblical sources (Josephus, Tacitus, Pliny the Younger) confirm biblical events.
5. **Prophecy Fulfillment** – Hundreds of prophecies (destruction of Jerusalem, rise/fall of empires, etc.) were fulfilled.
6. **Textual Preservation** – Over 5,800 Greek NT manuscripts (25,000+ total). The Bible has the most textual evidence of any ancient document.
7. **Subjective Transformation** – Millions of lives transformed through the Bible's message.
8. **The Resurrection of Christ** – Formidable proof and eye-witness

### V. What Is the Bible About?

- **John 5:39** – The Scriptures point to Jesus.
- **Luke 24:27** – Jesus explained how all Scripture is about Him.
- **John 20:30-31** – The Bible's purpose is to bring you to faith in Jesus.

### VI. Who Wrote the Bible?

- **2 Peter 1:21** – Men wrote, but they were "carried along" by the Holy Spirit.



- **2 Timothy 3:15-16** – The Scriptures are **God-breathed** (Theopneustos).
- The Bible is:
  - **Inspired** – God’s very Word.
  - **Inerrant** – Without error.
  - **Infallible** – Cannot fail.
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## **EXCURSUS: Mainline Liberal Denominations**

### **I. Mainline Liberal Denominations**

- Examples: UMC, ELCA, Episcopal, PCUSA, etc.
- View:
  - **“The Bible contains the Word of God”** (not all of it is authoritative).
  - This leads to subjective interpretation (abortion, LGBTQ, women pastors, etc.).

### **II. Higher Criticism**

- Approach: **Stand above** the Bible and critique it (using reason, culture, or personal feelings).
- Result: The Bible becomes a *human document* open to change and error.

### **III. Confessional Lutheran (LCMS) View**

- **“The Bible is the Word of God.”**
- Every word, chapter, and book is from God.
- Approach: Stand **under** the Bible and let it critique and change us.

### **IV. Lower Criticism (The Confessional Lutheran View)**

- **We do not critique the Bible** — the Bible critiques us.
- **We do not change the Bible** — the Bible changes us.
- **We do not stand above the Bible** — we stand under it.

### **V. Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi (Worship Affects Belief)**

- **Meaning:** "The law of prayer is the law of belief."
- How you act in worship will shape your beliefs.
- Example: If you treat church as casual, children will believe it is unimportant.
- If you treat church reverently, children will learn to fear and love God.

### **VI. Summary**

- **Christ is the center** of Christianity and the Bible.
- **The Bible is God’s Word** and is completely reliable.
- **The goal of life** is to know Christ personally and trust Him.



- Our faith is **not based on feelings, culture, or tradition** — it is based on **God's revealed Word**.

### ✓ Key Takeaway:

- To know God, you must know **Jesus**.
- To know Jesus, you must know **the Bible**.
- The Bible **is the Word of God** — not just some of it, but all of it.

## Questions

1. What are the major worldviews about God, and how does Christianity differ from them?
2. Why is Jesus central to Christianity, and how do other religions view Him?
3. In Philippians 3:7-8, Paul says he considers everything “loss” compared to knowing Christ. What does this mean for us today?
4. According to John 10:14-15, what does it truly mean to “know” Jesus?
5. How can we balance Christianity as both a religion (formal worship) and a relationship (personal faith in Jesus)?
6. What makes the Bible different from other religious texts, and why does that matter?
7. What are some key reasons we can trust the Bible as reliable and true?
8. How does knowing that all Scripture points to Jesus change the way we read the Bible?
9. What is the difference between believing “The Bible contains the Word of God” versus “The Bible is the Word of God”?
10. How has this lesson changed the way you think about Jesus, the Bible, or your faith?